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1962, 324
1962, 446

Of Allen W. Dulles, now that he has stepped aside as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, it may be said that though he exercised great power, it could not possess him.

To the end of the run, he has been a modest, indeed an almost humble, servant of government. Many times he must have chuckled on reading a description of himself as the "super-spy" of the United States. There is nothing secretive or untoward in his nature. He is an outgoing man, filled with what the Scots call "innerliness" and the love of good company. It was one of the ironies of his career that because he was also a first-class organizer, with a vast knowledge of the seamy side of international operations, he became head man of the world's largest intelligence organization. The country needed him and he said yes. It was as simple as that.

Under his guidance, CIA became a powerful organization, some will say too powerful. Its rapid growth, and the extension of its influence through many fields of government activity were almost inevitable, when the swiftly mounting pressures of the cold war are taken into account. The mandatory secrecy of CIA is in the political sense its greatest handicap. Whereas it is always ridiculed for its failures, which are made obvious, it may never boast of its successes, which must stay buried.

None of this mars the image of Dulles. Washington will remember the figure of a kindly old gentleman in tweeds, sitting sprawled, puffing at his briar, talking of cabbages and kings, and of world problems vast beyond compass.